Questions on war and peace

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How can a person who calls themself a follower of Jesus go to war?
Why are peace activists failing to bring about world peace?

One can address these questions, determine the answers, and know what to do about it.
As Christians, we know our Creator has not abandoned us, and we can be confident that our Lord has pointed us to the correct way of thinking and living. We can be confident to receive an answer by looking at the resources He gave all of us. He gave us the scriptures, and even came to our world in person, to teach and show by example how we are to live as followers of our Lord and Saviour.

The answer is found by considering 3 key subjects for all Christians.
Authority, Faith, and Obedience.

If we are seeking answers, we have been shown by our earliest Christian teachers how to do this in a real and practical way. Reading from the book of Acts, we know the Berean Church was commended for their actions. What were their actions? The Berean's examined the scriptures daily to see if what they heard was true, and they were commended for this. So, we do have an example to follow, and if we emulate these people, we will surely find the wisdom and understanding we are looking for.

Proverbs 9 verse 10 says, :The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Fear of the Lord? Fear? Does this apply to us today? Aren't we in the time of grace? Isn't that for the people back in the old testament? When Jesus was approached by those seeking advice, He very often would point them to scripture, as far back as the book of Genesis. So,we can see that Jesus wants us to make use of all that is available to us, and the examples and teaching of the old testament are provided for our benefit. Often, in today's presentations, a great amount of time is spent highlighting the grace of God, but much less time looking at the time before the cross. It is much easier for us to look at the part of God's character which displays His grace and mercy, than it is to spend time looking at the part of God's character which displays His uncompromising justice and righteousness. So, we have to remember that God has revealed to us the balance of His character. He is loving, merciful, righteous and just. He is not only our Saviour, but also our Lord. So we can not dissect the character of God. We have to take Him as He is shown to us in His wholeness, and that includes the God of the old testament, because the Father and the Son are One. Grace is a wonderful gift, especially because we can do nothing by our own works to receive it. So grace and Saviour are comfortable and easy for us. But, what about the Lord part of our God. How are we to look at this part of Him? Are we to think because we are recipients of grace, we can minimise His position as the Lord of all creation? How do we address our Lord, and what does it mean to be a Lord?
A Lord must be respected. Why? Because, His knowledge is greater than ours. A Lord must be obeyed. Why? Because, He is in authority. In Matthew 28, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." How much authority? ALL authority. So, as Christians, we understand that we are subjects under our Lord. Are subjects of a kingdom required to obey their Lord? Yes. Are there consequences for disobedience? Yes. Jesus tells us clearly, all will be rewarded according to their works. What kind of reward? A just reward. It is also clear that we will reap what we sow. Passages in scripture remind us the seriousness of obedience to our Lord, who, we must never forget, is perfect in His justice, and all men, including Christians, will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Galatians 6 reminds us, :
Be not deceived; God is not mocked,: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

In today's popular Christian messages we hear only of God's grace, and far less often, hear about His righteous judgement, and that we as Christians will be subject to it. Just rewards must be just, and our perfect Lord will not become unjust for any man. So, if we are to believe the words of Jesus, we can be assured that our deeds matter. This means obedience to the commands of our Lord matter, and if we disobey our Lord, He makes it very clear there will be consequences.
In 2nd Corinthians 11, we see the church made aware, and warned that there will be those who preach "another" Jesus. So, when we are given presentations of a Jesus who is unbalanced, and incomplete in revelation of His character, this is cause for great concern. Our Lord is described as all powerful, and perfectly righteous, and when questioned about what is the greatest commandment of all, he said, : "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and all your strength." So, He is telling us this is not a casual relationship. This is a serious relationship, and He expects us to use all He has given us to understand His commands. He tells us our works will be judged, and just recompense will be administered. He is not a cotton candy Lord who carries no weight to His authority, and He is not to be painted in a sugar coated manner. Scripture is very clear, our Lord, as merciful and loving as He may be, is to be feared if we disobey Him.
This is why scripture reminds us of who is to be feared. Matthew 10, 28 says,: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
So, when we access these statements in scripture available to all of us, we begin to receive full and balanced knowledge of the Holy One. We also realise that it is wise to fear Him. Jesus commands His disciples to act, so this fear is not expected to be paralysing, but to keep us grounded in the reality of who we serve.
Knowing this, and that we will stand in judgement before our Lord, it would be prudent to see what He told us in His own words. Since He will judge us, it would be wise to consider His words over that of men, as Jesus teaching is perfect, and He is infallible. He is the ultimate authority and final word, and this is why His words must be placed higher than those of all other men.
Our Lord created the world, and He also created the nations. So God divided the people, established the languages, and scattered mankind across the face of the earth to become individual nations. With regard to nations, and wars between them, we have relationships which are allies and enemies. What are the words of our Lord with respect to this?
Matthew 5 verse 43, Jesus says, " You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."
Jesus makes this very clear, and says, " I tell you." So, when we stand before Him shall we say we weren't told? Or shall we say, "yes, you told me, but I knowingly chose to listen to the words of a sinful and fallible man over your clear instructions". If we disobey Him, we will have to give an answer.
Jesus also gives wisdom in this passage, as he contrasts what the people had been hearing. So, we are to consider what we are hearing from men, and compare it to what our Lord tells us.
This instruction from Jesus is also consistent with the old testament, with how we are instructed to act towards our enemies. In Proverbs 25 we are told, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, if he is thirsty, give him water to drink". Why? Scripture here tells us why, "the LORD will reward you". So, it is clear we are to love our enemies, and it would be logical to conclude this means not killing them. Also, we are instructed to put resources which God provides for us to live, to be shared with those who are considered enemies.

One can ask, "but, if we don't take up arms against an enemy, won't they persecute us?" One can further ask, "if we as human beings with limited knowledge can pose this question, would not our all knowing Creator have considered this?"

If we considered this, we have to expect our Lord has also, for we can not possess knowledge greater than He does. God does not command us to know all that He knows, or to understand all that He understands. He commands us to be obedient to His instructions, and we may not always understand why He tells us to act in a certain way. We have to recognise who He is, in comparison to who we are, and scriptures remind us of this truth, such as Isaiah 55 which says, " For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declared the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"
So, we must acknowledge His wisdom over ours, and remain humble before the Lord. If we considered it, He did also.
Question.: If I am a servant of the Lord, and if obedience to the clear instruction of our Lord could lead to persecution, is this potential to be expected? What exactly did Jesus tell us about this? In John 15 Jesus states, "Remember what I told you,: 'A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."
So, by Jesus own words, he says, "Remember what I told you". This shows that He is giving clear understanding to His servants. He thought about it before we did, and yet still instructed us to be obedient. He knew that servants obedient to His instruction would face persecution and suffering at the hands of evil men, but yet, He is clear that if we receive this treatment, we are not to retaliate. In Matthew 5, Jesus states, "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person." Why? Because, not only is it in direct disobedience to His clear instructions, which we understand have consequences for Christians, He further advises in Matthew 26, " for all those who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword." Jesus is very clear on His teaching with regard to non-resistance and use of weapons.

If we study scripture, we can see that after mankind had sinned, we created a spiritual separation from our Lord. So, what could have been easily communicated to us by direct spiritual revelation was not accessible to mankind until after the day of Pentecost, when mankind could be spiritually regenerated and guided by the Holy Spirit. So, understanding this, we have to recognise that God had to make ways to reveal His will and teaching to us by the available means. The progression of teaching we see is in a fashion of course, medium, and fine revelation. Or in terms of physical, then mental, then spiritual. So, as we see the progression of God's revelation to mankind in this way, we realise the examples of the old testament were a starting point for teaching, and as the examples progress, we come to higher and higher levels of understanding. We progress from physical examples, then to mental contemplations, and eventually we can receive spiritual guidance.
When one evaluates scripture, we have to evaluate the old testament in light of the new testament, because we see the full revelation of what God was showing us, only by considering the highest level of teaching.
So, we can compare this to the way we receive teaching in our education system. First, grade school, then high school, then university. As Christians we have the fulfilled teaching of Jesus Christ, something our ancestors of early creation did not. So, we are expected to be operating at the highest level of understanding, this means, we are to look at the progression of lessons starting in the old testament, leading up to the completed teaching given by our Lord Himself. We are not to ignore examples of the old testament, otherwise, we will end up re-living them for no reason. So, because our Lord permitted, or called for certain actions which contained violence in the old testament, this does not mean we are to repeat them. This would be similar to a person who achieved a university education returning back to sit through a class of the ABC's. We have to understand and trust that God permitted examples in the old testament, because it was necessary to show us by means humankind could understand at the time, not as a perpetual example to how we are to act today. Also, not as any kind of perpetual endorsement to violence. God clearly reveals to us, early in scripture His assessment of violence. We read from Genesis 6, which says, Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.
So, the first equation of corruption in scripture is violence. Violence is corrupt, this is clear.

We know this grieved the heart of God when He witnessed it, and we know there were severe consequences of judgement to mankind, and all the earth because of this behaviour.
One can ask, " so why did God permit all the wars in the old testament? He even participated in some of them, didn't He? Surely this means that war can be justified today?"
One can further ask, " If God had to use physical examples, that lead to mental concepts, which then lead to spiritual understanding, when would be the best time in history to permit this? When would humankind suffer the least amount of lost life? Would it be at the beginning of history when the global population was small, or would it be later in history when the earth was highly populated?"

If one recognises that God is the source of life, this means that His examples have to deal with life and death. While we are here in our physical bodies, we tend to think of physical death, and not look beyond our immediate circumstances. God looks far beyond what we can consider in the physical, and revealed to us the greatest loss is not physical, but the spiritual. Our creator has shown us that He has the ability to raise the dead, and provide us a regenerated body as He did for Christ. We know physical regeneration is within His means, and it was necessary for Him to use physical examples that were real, in order for humankind to see and understand what God had to reveal to us. The examples in the old testament involving war were painful and costly, and they were done at a time in history when the population was small. They were not provided as endorsement for future behaviour, but to be used for us to receive the knowledge of them, without having to suffer the physical deaths ourselves in this era of fulfilled revelation.
If we read in 1st Corinthians 10, we see warnings from Israel's history. Verse 6 says, "Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."
We know that God considers violence as corrupt and evil, so we are given examples, suffered dearly by the one nation God chose to live them through. This was done for our benefit, so that we did not have to live through them also. We can receive the higher level of mental education from reading the examples in scripture, and avoid living through them ourselves. God made a way for us to know, without adding to the loss of lives that already occurred in God's permitting the examples to take place.
Let us reason. Did the participation of the Israelites in the activities of war lead them to lasting peace? No, it did not. No matter what level of God's involvement, whether He removed the evil nations by His own hand, or a partial help, or no help at all, the acts of war did not lead to lasting peace. God permitted the people of Israel to try every conceivable combination to achieve peace through this means, and it failed. Ultimately, the Israelites were scattered, and they have yet to be fully restored. So, we know the end result of this path, and it does not lead to peace.
We also have to remember, our Creator is all knowing and eternal. He knows every person before they were born. This means He also knows when and where each person will be in history and country. He also knows who will accept Him, and who will not. So, for us, in our limited human knowledge, we have to remember to remain humble, and acknowledge that God would use the ones who He told us were already judged for examples to us. He only permitted these acts of war against the people and nations who He had already judged as being evil, as we know God's wrath does not fall upon the innocent. The scripture clearly tells us, the people and nations that were judged had been involved in horrific acts against the truly innocent. These nations worshipped the false gods, and the occult concepts of Lucifer. They engaged in continuous human sacrifice of infants, and moral corruption of every conceivable kind. When people say, " my God would not commit genocide", they are correct. God is perfect in His righteous judgement, and the God of the old testament did not commit genocide, but exercised His judgement openly, to provide example of where the actions of those nations would lead to, death. Worship and sacrifice to false gods will not lead to life, and God did not permit those nations the means to continue in their wicked ways perpetually. He is sovereign in all decisions, and we have to trust in our Lord that He is making a way for salvation, while at the same time, minimising the loss of life. The horror of death is the result of mankind separating ourselves from the only source of life, and in His mercy, He deemed a way for us to be

saved. It is not for us, as limited human beings, to be so prideful as to judge the actions of our all knowing Creator, but rather to acknowledge His greatness, and wisdom in all matters of life and death.
So, the examples of the old testament with regard to violence and war were very costly, and worthy of examination. We are given examples that relate to individuals, and also kings and nations.
The examples show what was permitted, and what the results were, and they were given over long periods of history to allow the principles enough time to prove their results. So if we take the basic principles that we were shown, and compress the time, we then can see clearly the progression of teaching and where it leads to, both on individual levels and on national levels.

Let's start with the first act of violence recorded in human history and what God did. Cain was the first man to kill. He tried to present the offerings from his life in a way that he deemed acceptable to the Lord. When the Lord told him that the offerings from life must be according to God's standard, and not man's, Cain fell to hatred and killed his brother. So what did God do about this? God did not judge Cain with an immediate removal of His hand of protection, but rather in His mercy permitted Cain to live. Cain was not given any laws to live by and as we know, the earth became filled with people who were corrupt and violent. By giving mankind the opportunity to act on his own, the earth became so corrupt, that God had to take dramatic and severe actions of judgement. So we now know that lawlessness leads to violence and death.
Next, after this judgement, we see God interacting with Noah. God does not permit complete lawlessness again, but rather, sets for mankind a rudimentary and primitive kind of law. In Genesis 9, God advises that there will now be an accounting for the life of every man. He states that He will demand an accounting. God says " whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed". Why? He explains, : for in the image of God, has God made mankind". So, unlike Cain which total lawlessness was permitted, God begins to show mankind there will be consequences to those who choose violence toward the ones who were made in the image of God. This primitive and primal kind of law was deemed. So where did this lead to? It did not lead to life, but this kind of law multiplied death, and did not lead to life and peace. Today, if we want to see a modern example of those who choose this path, we only need to look at the codes followed by street gangs in the city, or the generational feuds of rural families. Violence leads to violence.
So then, what must happen when laws are not obeyed? Does this lead to less laws? No, more laws must be given to set order.
Next we see that God advances our learning process, and provides Moses a very basic set of laws to follow, it is an expansion of the primitive laws and begins to lead us into a mental understanding. Did the Israelites keep the 10 laws? No, they did not. This simple set of written laws was unable to be kept, and violence and corruption remained.
Moses is commanded to further expand the written laws to 613 ordinances, which cover all aspects of their society, and also introduces mankind to the idea of a justice system. We only know of justice because God taught us this, to bring us to the understanding that our universe was created by a just God, who will judge us according to His moral standards. So, did this concept of many expanded written laws and a justice system lead to sustainable peace and life? No, it does not. Today we can see our modern society has a great many more laws, so many that we require specialist lawyers, trained thinking men with years of case knowledge, but yet, crimes and violence persist in civil, national, and international scenarios alike. Spending on military and law enforcement is higher than ever in human history. The thinking law does not lead to lasting peace.
Finally, we see that God brings mankind to the level of spiritual understanding. He comes to our world in person and explains how we are to live. Jesus Himself fulfils the teaching process and shows us the highest level of understanding, first by His teaching, such as found in Matthew 5, with the sermon on the mount, and through His examples of how He acted when faced with conflict or violence, then finally He provided us His Holy Spirit, to enable us to fulfil the Father's will of never being involved in taking the life of one who was made in the image of God.

So by compressing this history of teaching, we can see that God taught mankind in a logical progression. He permitted us to see with certainty that there is no path to lasting peace by any other means than accepting the highest and fulfilled level of teaching. All other ways lead to death and failure, not only in the physical, but also the spiritual. He showed mankind we are now to be operating at the highest level of understanding, and as Christians we can do this. Not by our own power, but because we have been given the gift of the power of God, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus shows us how to live as followers of His ways of non-violence, praying for the ones who persecute, giving to those who are considered enemies, and acting peacefully at whatever the physical cost. We can trust and be obedient to Him, because He gave us the power of the Spirit, and He revealed fully to mankind the reward for obedience, which is physical restoration and unity with the Father. We are expected to move forward, not backward. So, just as the university student does not go back to sit in a class of the ABC's, we as Christians do not go back to the behaviour of the failed examples that preceded the cross.
As fallen men we started our lives with a spirit unable to see, but just like grinding of a lens, through course, medium, then fine work, God has restored and corrected our spiritual sight and we are now able to see clearly. We no longer walk in spiritual blindness, as the gift of these examples, and the gift of the Holy Spirit within us allows us to see the path to life, peace, and unity with God.

Continuing on, let us examine a few old testament cases from which some of the greatest men in biblical history were involved. Surely this will shed some light as to what this participation led to, for the leaders and the people of Israel who were involved.

In 2nd Chronicles 14, we start to learn about Asa, King of Judah. It is recorded that Asa started out very well. We read,: Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. What was the result of this? We read, No one was at war with him during those years, for the LORD gave him rest. Asa acknowledged the reason for this and said, "The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. Later, Judah became faced with the situation of an enormous army that had come to conquer, the army was one million men, and King Asa, would be no match for them. What did Asa do? Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you." The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah.
Asa called on the Lord to deliver them, and the kingdom was delivered. Asa continued further reforms to the kingdom which taught the people even more about God. Asa enjoyed peace for 35 years of his reign, and remained protected because of his loyalty to worship the one true and living God, and He relied not on his own power, but relied on the Lord. In the 36th year Asa was faced again with impending war, but this time, rather than call out to the Lord, Asa made a pact with the king of a pagan nation to solve the problem. What was the result of this? We read, Hanani the seer came and told Asa, For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war. So, Asa started out well and trusted fully in the Lord, but later in his life decided to rely on the means of men, and this shows us that peace and deliverance are given by God to those who wholeheartedly trust, rely and call out to him. If we depend on ourselves, we will always be at war. We see later that Asa developed a life threatening disease, but refused to call out to the Lord for healing, rather, he relied only on his physician. Asa died from the disease.

Lets have a look at another King, recorded in the Book of 2nd Kings chapter 18. King Hezekiah of Judah, also did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He commanded the people to only worship the one true and living God. It is written, Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. Later in his reign, Judah was faced with imminent attack from the most powerful army in the world. The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander to confront Hezekiah. The commander ridiculed Hezekiah for trusting fully in the Lord and shouted to all the people "Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" What did Hezekiah do? He humbled himself in front of the Lord, and called out in prayer. "LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words sent to ridicule the living God. "It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God." What was the result of Hezekiah's humble actions when faced by the most powerful army in the world? We read, That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies! So the king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. So we can see again, that just as with the example we previously saw with King Asa, the people who were hopelessly lost to defend themselves against these armies were delivered, not by their own hand, but by the Lord. The people who were least able to defend themselves, and who were previously loyal and obedient in their worship to the Lord, were delivered in these times of war. Like King Asa, we learn that King Hezekiah also became ill. We read, In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover." Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, "Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life. So we can see that Hezekiah acted differently than Asa and called out to the Lord, and the Lord graciously added 15 years to his life. We can see the consistency of the character of God. He delivers those nations who have been devoted to Him alone, no matter how large or powerful the enemy. When the kings relied on themselves and the power of their weapons and men, they did not receive deliverance, but continual war. These examples show us clearly that God will protect the weak against the mighty, if they are loyal to worship the true and living God.

King David is considered by many to have been the greatest king of the old testament. He is called a man after God's own heart. David loved the Lord deeply and the events of David's life are well known. He wrote the book of psalms, and we know that from the line of David our Messiah would come. David's kingdom was at the height of all the Israelites history and he truly was a great King. We know that because of his love for the Lord, it was King David's great desire to build the temple of the Lord, and he had the plans and treasure needed to accomplish it. Surely one would think that David would have been the one to build it, but what happened? Why did he not? We read in 1st Chronicles 28,: King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house

for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.' Why? Because you are a warrior and have shed blood. So we can see that as great a King as David was, and as much as he loved the Lord, God refused to allow him to build a temple in God's name. The reason given is clear. So for us, those who are living after the time of the cross, and after the time of Pentecost, what are we told about where the temple will be now? 1st Corinthians 3 tells us,: Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? So, this brings to mind the question, if David was not permitted to make a temple for which the Lord was to reside, because he was a warrior who shed the blood of men, then how are we today, able to make a temple for the Lord within ourselves, if we become warriors and shed the blood of men? We know that our Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so one has to consider this. Are the actions we choose to participate in making us acceptable as a temple for the Lord?

Probably the most known person from the old testament would be Moses. Like King David, Moses was a great man, who feared the Lord, and served the Lord with loyalty and dedicated many years of his life to the service of God. We know he was given the great responsibility of delivering the 10 commandments and the law to the Israelites. He spent more time than anyone personally speaking with God, and he was given the great and seemingly impossible task to lead the nation of Israel out of their slavery and oppression. He was given great authority to exercise God's commands and he was given great power held in the staff he carried. He was the greatest prophet, leader, and teacher that the Israelites had ever known. But what kind of person was he? What does scripture say about him? In the book of Numbers we read,: Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. So, scripture shows us God uses the meek and humble men, through which our Lord accomplishes great works. What kind of works? Deliverance. If we really look into the message of the old testament, to see what all of these historical accounts between the interactions of God, the ones God considered His children, and the ones who were not, we can see that God is showing us how He delivers His children from the wicked and corrupt people and nations of the world. God shows us a pattern of His character, teaches us how we can achieve deliverance from those who would enslave, persecute, oppress, or kill the ones God had adopted as His own children. We can see this pattern established in the account of Moses being called to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. The Egyptians worshipped the false gods of the occult, and even came to believe that their leaders, the Pharaoh's, were gods on earth. The people of Egypt put their faith in the power of false gods, false teachers, false magicians, and false leaders, who's ways were evil and wicked in the sight of the Lord. God judged this nation as evil, and sent Moses to ask the Pharaoh to let Gods people go. Moses asked repeatedly and told Pharaoh it was not a man asking, but explained it was the one true and living God who sent this message. Pharaoh refused to listen and a series of hardships were brought upon the Egyptians with increasing magnitude until finally the Israelite slaves were permitted freedom from their oppression. As the people were leaving, Pharaoh sent his great army to force the slaves return or kill them. What was the reaction of the Israelites? In Exodus chapter 14 we read,: As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." What did the people do? They cried out to the Lord. What did Moses their leader instruct? Did Moses tell them to fight and defend themselves? No, he did not. He said "The LORD will fight for you, you need only to be still. The Lord heard the cry of the helpless and saw their obedience. Then the Lord permitted the escape of the people and delivered them. Did the great and powerful army who pursued them survive? No. They all perished, not one survived. What was the result of this? We read further,: And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. Later the Lord tells the people, He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the

diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." So we can see how it is God who delivers and heals the ones who worship Him alone, and who are obedient to His instructions. The Lord delivers the ones who trust Him. We can see that it is not the strength of men, or their armies that deliver, but we are shown repeatedly, over and over in the old testament, that God is showing us not to put our faith in the sword and our own power. If we are looking for deliverance, these are the examples that show us how to achieve it. In the same way we see that when people put their faith in men, or military, or any other god but our Lord, there is no deliverance, but just the opposite, continual war. So God is clearly showing us, He will deliver us to life if we trust Him and obey Him in how he tells us to act.

So understanding these lessons, and knowing they were permitted as a means of progressive teaching from our Lord, we as Christians today know that these matters are real, serious, and following the Lord and His instructions is a serious matter. These are matters of life and death. Faith is not a hobby. We are to fear the Lord, as He will judge the deeds of all men, and will not allow perpetual departure from His commands. He will not grant life to those who worship any god but the one true and living God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These lessons were fresh in the minds of Jesus disciples, and these were the basis of what they had to work from. As Jesus furthered their teaching, it took time for them to understand what He was talking about. They knew old testament scriptures, but now they were hearing clear instructions from Jesus, which were being taught on a spiritual level. Even though they were with Him in person, we know they did not understand Him fully at the time. It was not until receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by asking for discernment from the Spirit, they became able to understand and live out the teaching Jesus had instructed them to do.

For example, at the last supper, Jesus got up to wash the disciples feet, they said, no, out of respect. They did not understand that the reference to the immediate physical example of washing, was actually a reference to spiritual cleansing that Jesus must do to make us acceptable to the Father. They were still not operating at a level of spiritual understanding yet. This is clear from Jesus words in John 13,: Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Later they did understand. We see this in other examples of the new followers of Christ, they were not at a mature spiritual level of understanding at the time. Another clear example is seen in the gospel of Luke 22. In this chapter, we see just before Jesus will offer Himself to the death of the cross, He is trying to prepare His disciples to let them know that they will have to now prepare themselves for hardship and spiritual warfare. Jesus knew that as soon as Satan was defeated by Jesus death on the cross, the disciples would have to become prepared for the spiritual battle that would result from Satan's defeat. Things would be different for them going forward from that day. We read,: Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one." So Jesus was not speaking of the physical, but the spiritual. We see that the disciples did not have the ability to discern this spiritual teaching yet, as we see their response, The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." How did Jesus react to this display of physical weapons? He exclaims "That's enough!" So we can see this was still beyond their understanding at that point. We see the same sentiments very soon again in the garden where Jesus was taken away by the authorities, when one of the disciples raised a sword to strike a soldier. We read,: When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. We can further see Jesus comments on the use of weapons from the book of Mathew where Jesus says, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." Jesus is consistent in His clear message of non-violence and non-resistance in both His actions and words.

We know the level of the disciples understanding did eventually come into fulfilment after they received the power of the Holy Spirit. From that time they were then able to discern the teaching of Jesus correctly. As evidenced by the teaching of the apostles, such as we see in the Book of Ephesians 6 verse 12, which reads,: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. We see they did come to understand what Jesus was teaching, and they themselves proceeded to teach and act in the same way.

As Christians today, we are promised we have the Holy Spirit to give us correct guidance and discernment, and this allows us to act and teach correctly. We know the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not contradict each other. We know that God is not the author of confusion, so scripture and Holy Spirit will never contradict each other either. Even though Jesus is not telling us in words to our own ears, we do have His clear written instructions, and also how He interacted with His disciples about violence. We can know with certainty what He taught, and what His personal examples are clearly showing approval, or disapproval to the actions of His followers.

The accounts of the early Church reflect this, as we have many records from this time in Christian history. We know the early church did not engage in the practice of war. They did not prepare for war. They considered it unlawful, and it was common knowledge that Christians were not trained for warfare, and didn't know how to fight. Soldiers who converted to Christianity renounced their military service and refused to bear arms. Sadly, many of these soldiers were severely persecuted and killed for their obedience to the teaching of the Christian church. The earliest and closest followers of Christ lived this way, and the churches they established, were known to all as peaceful and obedient followers to the clear instructions of our Lord Jesus.

So, are we to say that the apostles themselves, who received the revelation and Spirit given from Christ Himself in the upper room, were somehow mistaken? Are we to claim they were misguided? Or that they immediately became lost to error of their ways? We know that the early church acted in this manner for hundreds of years before making a departure from this teaching. So for us today, knowing these things, we do have the opportunity to call upon the Holy Spirit to guide in how we are to act. If a departure was made from the model that was established by the apostles has occurred, we do have the ability to return to the example they set for us. The early Christians were not commanded to go forward with the sword, but Jesus did give a commission to the ones who were to follow Him. The ones called to spiritual warfare. We can see His instructions as written in Matthew chapter 28 which reads,: Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So, Jesus said, "teaching them to obey everything I commanded you". We are to obey the words of Jesus. All power and authority have been given to Him, so this means, we can not place the words of any man above the words of God, who has all power and authority.

We can expect that unless we are operating at the spiritual level of understanding that Jesus fulfilled, we can not understand why we are to proceed this way. Otherwise, we are only operating at the level of natural mankind, and that is not a high enough level of understanding. The apostles explain this as seen in 1st Corinthians 2 which reads,: The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. So, we must call upon the discernment of the Spirit that Jesus sent us in order to understand what He is teaching us to do.

When the disciples went forth on their commission, they were sent into the territory of the enemy, but they did not go there with weapons of the natural man. They went to the enemy with the weapons as instructed by the apostles. " Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." They went forward to the enemy, but as Jesus commanded, they loved them the same as their friends and neighbours. They risked their lives following in obedience how we are to fight, not by the physical means, but by the spiritual means, the word of God. John 15 reads," Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Jesus did not tell us to rise up and fight the enemy with physical deeds, He laid down His life, voluntarily, without fighting in the physical, and calls us to do the same. The forces of evil are of spiritual origin, and this is where our battle really is. We can not defeat the spiritual by trying to use the physical. His apostles followed His example and did have to give up their lives in obedience to Him. Today, Christians who are obedient to our Lord may also experience persecution, and may also have to give up our lives. We are reminded that as followers of Christ we are not to try and keep our lives by use of the sword, but if we lose our physical life in obedience to Him, we will not die spiritually. Sentiments of this principle can be seen in scriptures like Luke 17 which says," Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it."

No one feared the disciples because they carried no weapons. They could approach anyone, and could preach the gospel extremely effectively, because the people they were speaking to were not threatened by the disciples in any way. The people could hear them and not have any cloud of fear attached to the ones who preached the gospel. No one feared a Christian because it was common knowledge that Christians would never engage in war, or carry a weapon, or act in a way that would harm, or be violent. So, if we look at our situation today, after mainstream Christianity has departed from the example set by the apostles, do people fear Christians? Yes, people fear Christians. The bullets and bombs are just as deadly, whether they have a cross painted on them or not. Many nations of the world today fear the armies and weapons employed by Christians, and are in fear of the Christian. They are spiritually unreachable when in fear, and it then becomes impossible for them to receive the gospel of Christ, and receive salvation. The bullets and bombs of the Christian armies kill the ones made in the image of God, and we are not called to fulfil our commission this way. If we really want to save lives, then we have to understand that saving the physical is not enough, men must be saved spiritually if they are to live. So if we, and our Christian neighbours are spiritually saved, then no enemy can take our real life. John 10 reminds us the words of our Lord,: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand." If we understand this, then we realise that our enemies who are made in the image of God, and are not spiritually saved, are the ones we must reach. It is impossible to save their lives without reaching them with the gospel, and if they think we are going to kill them, or they fear us, we then become completely ineffective to follow the real commission Jesus gave us. We can not be obedient to His orders by following the orders of another. No man can serve two masters. We have to decide.

World peace can not be achieved because the world is covered in a veil of spiritual darkness. Men will continue to kill each other until they reach the level of understanding provided by the Holy Spirit. World peace will only be achieved by enlightening the world with the truth of who our Saviour is, The One true and Living God, who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and how He alone brings eternal life to all men who will hear His gospel and believe in Him. If we really want peace in this world we have to realize it can not be achieved by the physical actions or mental concepts of fallen men, it can only be achieved through the power of God. The reality is, that it is impossible for men to save this fallen world. But, then, who can save? For scripture says : As stated by our Lord, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." The truth and solution comes only by addressing the 3 key subjects of Authority, Faith, and Obedience. Recognise the authority of Jesus Christ above all others. Have faith that He will deliver you. And be obedient to His words.